

**STATE OF MINNESOTA
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY BOARD**

**In the Matter of Xcel Energy's
Application for a Route Permit for the
Buffalo-White High Voltage
Transmission Line, the new Yankee
Substation, and Associated Facilities in
Lincoln County, Minnesota**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
SCOPING DECISION
EQB Docket # 04-84-TR-XCEL
November 1, 2004**

The above-captioned matter has come before the Chair of the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) for a decision on the scope of the Environmental Assessment (EA) to be prepared on the Buffalo-White 115 kV transmission Line and the Yankee Substation project. The EQB held a public meeting on September 22, 2004, to discuss the project with the public and to identify issues to be included in the scope of the EA to be prepared for this project. The public was given until October 25, 2004, to submit written comments regarding the scope of the EA and to propose alternative routes or route segments and substation sites. Having reviewed the record in this matter and consulted with EQB staff, I hereby make the following Scoping Decision regarding:

MATTERS TO BE ADDRESSED

The Environmental Assessment on the proposed Buffalo-White High Voltage Transmission Line and the Yankee Substation project will address the following matters:

1.0 INTRODUCTION (A brief overview of the EQB permitting process and identification of what is discussed in the document).

- 1.1 Description
- 1.1 Purpose and Need
- 1.2 Sources of Information

2.0 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 Certificate of Need Requirement
- 2.2 Route Permit Requirement
- 2.3 Environmental Assessment
- 2.4 Public Hearing
- 2.5 South Dakota Permitting Requirements

- 2.6 Applicable Codes
- 2.7 List of Permits Required
- 2.8 Issues outside EQB Authority

3.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT (Includes Engineering Design, Construction and Right-of-Way Acquisition and Other Specific Features and Attributes of the Buffalo-White High Voltage Transmission line and Associated Facilities and the New Yankee Substation will be Described.)

- 3.1 Transmission Structure Design
- 3.2 Conductor and Shield Wire
- 3.3 Foundations
- 3.4 Design Options to Accommodate Future Expansion
- 3.5 Right-of-Way Requirements
- 3.6 Substation Design (Includes Yankee and existing Buffalo Ridge Substations
- 3.7 Design Options to Accommodate Future Expansion
- 3.8 Project Cost Estimates

4.0 ROUTE SEGMENTS AND SUBSTATION SITES

Governmental agencies (local and state) and the general public did not propose any new routes, route segments or substation sites during the scoping period.

The following route and substation alternatives will be evaluated in the EA:

1. The route proposed by Xcel Energy shown as segments A, B, C, D, E, and F) in Figure 1. Route segments G and H are located in South Dakota and not subject to EQB review. However, they will be discussed in the EA.

2. The Verdi Township route segment alternative running west from the intersection of 160th Avenue and 120th Street to County Highway 1, then north to the point where it intersects Xcel Energy's route between sections 5 and 6 in Verdi Township and sections 31 and 32 in Drammen Township.

3. Substation Sites. The EA will also evaluate the five proposed Yankee Substation sites located in sections 31, 29 and 30 in Drammen Township and in sections 5 and 6 in Verdi Township, as shown in Figure 1.

5.0 ANALYSIS OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT (Includes all transmission line route segments and proposed five substation sites.) This section will describe the potential human and environmental effects related to the proposed transmission line and proposed Yankee substation. Topics addressed will include:

- 5.1 Existing and Proposed Land Uses
- 5.2 Transportation

- 5.3 Noise
- 5.4 Human Settlement
- 5.5 Visual
- 5.6 Property Values
- 5.7 Socioeconomics
- 5.8 Economics
- 5.9 Archaeological and Historical Resources
- 5.10 Geology and Soils
- 5.11 Health and Safety
- 5.12 Water Quality
 - 5.12.1 Water Resources
 - 5.12.2 Surface Water
 - 5.12.3 Groundwater
 - 5.12.4 Wetlands
- 5.13 Biological Resources
 - 5.13.1 Flora
 - 5.13.2 Fauna
 - 5.13.3 Rare and Unique Natural Resources
- 5.16 Air Quality
- 5.17 Electric and Magnetic Fields
 - 5.17.1 Interagency White Paper on EMF
 - 5.17.2 Radio and Television Interference
 - 5.17.3 Stray Voltage

- 6. ANALYSIS OF MITIGATIVE MEASURES (Any specific measures for mitigating potential environmental or human impacts of the proposed project will be described).
- 7. IDENTIFICATION OF PERMITS REQUIRED (The EA will include a list of permits that will be required by Xcel Energy to construct the proposed project).

6.0 ISSUES OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The EQB will not, as part of this environmental review, consider whether a different size or different type of transmission line should be built instead or consider other system alternatives or other voltages. Nor will the EQB consider the no-build option.


The EQB will not evaluate any route segments through the Hole-in-the Mountain Prairie owned by the Nature Conservancy or the Hole-in-the Mountain Wildlife Management Areas managed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources because of their unique characteristics and objections expressed by the Nature Conservancy and DNR.

7.0 SCHEDULE FOR COMPLETION OF EA

The Environmental Assessment on the HVTTL will be completed by December 20, 2004. Upon completion of the EA, the EQB will notify those persons who have asked to be notified of the completion. In addition, the EQB will publish notice of the availability of the EA in the EQB Monitor (the bi-weekly newsletter of the agency). The EA will be made available for review and will be posted on the EQB webpage. The EQB will hold a public hearing in January 2005 in Lincoln County to provide an opportunity for the public to ask questions and to comment on the EA and route permit application.

Signed this 1st day of November, 2004

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A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert A. Schroeder", is written over a horizontal line.

Robert A. Schroeder, Chair

